Amendments to the Claims

1 1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for ~~solving~~

2 improving a solution to a combinatorial optimization problem including a

3 plurality of elements and a plurality of values, comprising the steps of:

4 applying a priority algorithm in a form of an ordering function to an

5 instance of the combinatorial optimization problem to produce an initial

6 solution including an ordering of the elements;

7 modifying the ordering of the elements to produce a re-ordering of the

8 elements;

9 applying a placement function to map values to the corresponding

10 elements of the re-ordering; and

11 repeating the modifying and the applying until all elements have been

12 placed to obtain ~~a~~ an improved solution of the combinatorial optimization

13 problem.

1 2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, in which the priority

2 algorithm is fixed.

1 3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, in which the priority

2 algorithm is dynamic.

1 4. (original) The method of claim 1, in which the re-ordering is within a

2 predetermined distance of the ordering.

1   5. (original) The method of claim 4, in which the distance is a Kendall-tau

2   distance.

1   6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, in which the re-ordering

2   uses a decision vector, and in which the decision vector has one field for

3   each element of the order, each field determining a new order of the element

4   in the re-ordering.

1   7. (original) The method of claim 1, in which the re-ordering is probabilistic.

1   8. (currently amended) A computer ~~program product~~ storing a computer

2   program which when executed by ~~a~~ the computer performs a method for

3   ~~solving~~ improving a solution to a combinatorial optimization problem

4   including a plurality of elements and a plurality of values by performing the

5   steps of:

6   applying a priority algorithm in a form of an ordering function to an

7   instance of the combinatorial optimization problem to produce an initial

8   solution including an ordering of the elements;

9   modifying the ordering of the elements to produce a re-ordering of the

10   elements;

11   applying a placement function to map values to the corresponding

12   elements of the re-ordering; and

13   repeating the modifying and the applying until all elements have been

14   placed to obtain ~~a~~ an improved solution of the combinatorial optimization

15   problem.

9. (canceled)

1   10. (previously presented) The method of ~~claim 9~~ claim 3, in which the re-

2   ordering is within a predetermined distance of the ordering.

1   11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, in which the distance is

2   a Kendall-tau distance.

1   12. (previously presented) The method of ~~claim 9~~ claim 3, in which the re-

2   ordering uses a decision vector, and in which the decision vector has one

3   field for each element of the order, each field determining a new order of the

4   element in the re-ordering.

1   13. (previously presented) The method of ~~claim 9~~ claim 3, in which the re-

2   ordering is probabilistic.

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